CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT
ON THE REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENTITLED
"NEW DIMENSIONS OF ARMS REGULATION AND DISARMAMENT IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA"

(Adopted at the 643rd plenary meeting on 18 February 1993)

1. By paragraph C of decision 47/422 of 9 December 1992 dealing with the reconvening of the First Committee from 8 to 12 March 1993, the General Assembly, inter alia, requested the Conference on Disarmament to transmit its views on the report of the Secretary-General entitled "New dimensions of arms regulation and disarmament in the post-cold war era". The Conference on Disarmament wishes to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his timely and useful report which offered an opportunity to ponder important issues of the present international reality.

2. The Conference is expressing herein its collective consideration of the issues within its competence addressed in that report.

3. With the end of the cold war, the prospects for disarmament and arms regulation have changed considerably. This has allowed the conclusion of additional major agreements in this field (Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, Treaty on Further Reductions and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction).

4. However, the end of the cold war and the beginning of effective arms reductions do not render the concept of disarmament and arms regulation obsolete. On the contrary, the new conditions of international security reinforce the relevance of disarmament and arms regulation, because they facilitate the conclusion of new bilateral and multilateral agreements that would establish and codify security at lower levels of armaments.

5. The new international environment does thus call for a new approach to international security.

6. With the changing international situation, the very concept of disarmament and arms regulation as a key element in pursuit of overall international security is being expanded and enriched:

- it can now even more readily be translated into concrete actions in keeping with the expectations of the international community;

- it now entails even more deep and verified reductions in the nuclear armaments of the two major Powers;

- it implies more and more the negotiation also of multilateral agreements;

- it now embraces all weapons of mass destruction;

- it also embraces conventional armaments;

- it includes more and more clearly the need, recognized by all, to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction, as well as their delivery systems;

- it also includes the recognized need to seek equal or better security and stability at lower levels of conventional armaments;

- it covers an increasingly broad spectrum of means of achieving security such as the implementation of confidence-building and transparency measures, as well as international verification;

- it also addresses the production, stockpiling and transfers of military equipment and technology, as well as the conversion of military capacities to peaceful uses;

- it also implies recognition of the fact that nuclear disarmament remains a priority task of our times.

7. Disarmament and arms regulation is thus not an end in itself but can now fulfil its real task as being a major instrument of international security.

8. Together with unilateral measures, and bilateral and regional agreements, disarmament needs more and more a multilateral approach and is a collective responsibility.

9. As the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community, the Conference therefore has an increased role to play. The recent conclusion of the Chemical Weapons Convention is, in this respect, a relevant example. It has indeed demonstrated that, even in areas directly affecting vital strategic, economic and industrial interests of so many different States, it is possible to reach an international consensus.

10. This increased role implies that the Conference remains, more than ever, the multilateral negotiating body of the international community in the field of disarmament.

11. There is a growing recognition of the integration of the various components of international security, and also of the fact that disarmament is a collective responsibility. In this respect, the application of the rule of consensus in the Conference ensures that decisions are taken on a broad basis, and thus encourages broad participation and facilitates the universal adherence to multilaterally negotiated agreements.

12. Moreover, the multilateral elaboration of norms containing verification provisions based on international controls ensures confidence in their implementation and therefore their universal acceptance; in this respect the rights of States to have access to technologies necessary for their economic and industrial development should be ensured.

13. There is also a clear complementarity between regional and global approaches to arms limitation and disarmament. In this respect, the regional approach to disarmament is one of the essential elements in the global efforts to strengthen international peace and security, arms limitation and disarmament. The objective of regional security should encourage universal adherence to global multilaterally negotiated disarmament agreements. In negotiating multilateral agreements, in particular in the field of confidence-building measures, the Conference should take into account all the security concerns of States in their regional context.

14. In order to meet the new challenges, the international community needs to rely on an effective multilateral machinery, with the existing tools at its disposal. For its part, in order to fulfil effectively its tasks enhanced by the new international conditions, the Conference has decided to intensify its consultations on its improved and effective functioning, including its decision to carry out consultations on the issues of its membership and agenda. The Conference is determined to proceed expeditiously on these issues.

15. The determination of the Conference is also reflected in its decision, adopted at the outset of its 1993 session, to begin immediately its work on: "Nuclear Test Ban", "Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space", "Effective International Arrangements to Assure Non-Nuclear-Weapon States against the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons" and "Transparency in Armaments". For this purpose, the Conference immediately established Ad Hoc Committees on these items.

16. As a negotiating body, the Conference maintains its own special status with respect to the other multilateral disarmament fora, in particular the First Committee of the General Assembly and the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

17. While maintaining its special status, the Conference remains responsive to the concerns of the international community. The Conference takes into account the recommendations made to it by the General Assembly as well as proposals presented by Member States and decides how to proceed. As a negotiating body, it has, according to its rules of procedure, to determine by consensus on which items there appears to be readiness to negotiate. As to its functions, it is the sense of the Conference that at this juncture it can best serve the international community by preserving its role as the sole multilateral global negotiating body on disarmament.

18. Finally, the Conference trusts that the Secretary-General, within existing resources, will continue to enable the Office of Disarmament Affairs to fulfil effectively the important task assigned to it by the Member States, including the provision of adequate services to the Conference.